

INTERVIEWING GUIDE

Chart of Legal vs. Illegal Questions When Conducting Interviews		
The following is a quick reference detailing legal and potentially discriminating interview questions		
Topic	Legal Questions	Discriminatory Questions
Family Status	Do you have any responsibilities that conflict with the job attendance or travel requirements? (Must be asked of all applicants).	Are you married? What is your spouse's name? What is your maiden name? Do you have any children? Are you pregnant? What are your child-care arrangements?
Race	None.	What is your race?
Religion	None. (You may inquire about availability for weekend work if required for the position for which you are interviewing.)	What is your religion? Which church do you attend? What are your religious holidays?
Residence	What is your address?	Do you own or rent your home? Who resides with you?
Sex	None.	Are you male or female?
Age	If hired, can you offer proof that you are at least 18 years of age?	How old are you? What is your birth date?
Arrests or Convictions of Crime	Have you ever been convicted of a crime? Felony or misdemeanor? Motor Vehicle Offences (do you have a driver's license – if required)?	Have you ever been arrested?
Citizenship or Nationality	Can you show proof of your eligibility to work in the U.S.? Are you fluent in any languages other than English? (You may ask the second question only as it	Where were you born? Are you a U.S. citizen? (HRO in processing will cover citizenship issues.)

	relates to the job being sought.)	
Disability	Are you able to perform the essential functions of this job. (Most National Guard jobs require you to be deployable world-wide – disabilities are disqualifying militarily in most cases)	Are you disabled? What is the nature or severity of your disability?

Interviewing Pitfalls

Allowing Interruptions. If at all possible, avoid interruptions. Failure to do so will generally tell the candidate that he or she is not as important as “rush phone calls” or intermittent “report signing” that may interfere with the interview.

Not treating interviewees as individuals. When interviewing a number of candidates for a given job, a natural tendency is to begin treating everyone as if they were the same. No two people have ever been found to be alike -- each is distinctly unique in many ways.

Not providing a good first impression. Someone once said: “No one ever found a successful way of getting a second chance at making a good first impression.” Your promptness will indicate the importance of being on time to your candidates. Your being late will indicate that things are hectic or that being late for work might be all right, too. Try to provide a neat, quiet, and orderly environment for the interview. Be friendly and warm. Provide a good first impression of your organization to each candidate you interview.

Not listening properly. Avoid the temptation to frequently introduce your own thoughts during the interview. The applicant is not there to hear about your experiences. Remember, you have a limited period of time to learn as much as you can about each candidate, and you won’t get this information if you are doing all of the talking.

Using nonjob-related questions. Not only can asking these questions be unlawful, but also it wastes time and will not provide you with much in the way of useful, selection/decision information. You wouldn’t, for example, ask about where a person was born, for generally doing so is both unlawful (potentially discriminatory because it could be a question probing ethnic origin) and in most cases, is irrelevant to your job requirements.

Arguing. An effective employment interview is not a contest. It's an important job. The interviewer who allows his or her own pride to get in the way of getting the relevant information will have to unlearn this trait.

Making promises you can't keep. If you know what the exact salary will be or what benefits your organization offers, you might want to discuss these. But never make a promise you or your organization can't keep. For example, if you can't ensure that definite "advancement" will occur within a few years after hire for the job in question, don't say that "advancement will probably be involved." The interviewee is very impressionable at this point and will remember such promises, however vaguely stated.

Lack of privacy and confidentiality. A closed door, a private or quiet environment, your own sensitivity... will all go a long way to assuring the candidate that you will treat information he or she shares with you confidentially.

Insufficient time for each interview. Don't try to squeeze too many interviews into a limited period of time. The time you allot should be governed primarily by the complexity of the job. From forty-five minutes to an hour is considered about right by many managers for an average job of average complexity.

Taking notes. Some find it helpful to take brief notes during an interview because notes are valuable in reconstructing information after the interview. But avoid the temptation to appear as if you are taking exceptionally careful notes when a candidate is discussing something sensitive or personal. Doing so can discourage the candidate from opening up during the remainder of the interview. If something sensitive emerges, drop the pencil, and listen with interest and sincerity. If it's important, you'll recall it after the interview.

Limiting yourself only to questions. Use comments too. A well-placed comment can "echo" or appear to provide support for something an applicant has just said, thus encouraging him or her to further amplify on that or other issues in the interview. Using only questions to get needed information will give candidates the impression they are under "interrogation."

Improper language level. This is a judgmental area, at best; but, in general, try to pitch your language, your questions and your comments at the level of the candidate, and the appropriate level of the job being filled. Don't speak down; don't speak up. Be natural.

Impatience. Sometimes a candidate won't go immediately in the direction you want. Be patient. Through proper use of open-ended questions, silence, and listening on your part, the interviewee will come around. Your impatience will inevitably lead to the applicant's anxiety and tenseness, as well as your own failure to get the relevant information.

“Gut” feelings. Our “gut” feelings cause us to feel generally good or generally bad about a candidate, usually because of one thing we’ve observed early in the interview. It can be damaging if we don’t give the candidate a chance to change that impression. Strive to keep from making judgments too quickly, especially in areas where we generally have strong, personal biases, such as with a person’s appearance.

Part I – Interviewing Techniques

Interviewers must remember that the primary goals of the interview are to obtain quality information concerning the candidate and provide factual information regarding the National Guard and the technician position for which the candidate is being interviewed.

Initial Contact. When you arrange an interview time with the candidate, be sure to tell him or her how long the process is likely to take. Ensure that the candidate understands the date, time, and location of the interview.

The Interview. When properly conducted, the interview can be an effective vehicle to evaluate the candidate’s understanding of the elements of the position, motivation to complete training, interpersonal skills, and clarity of speech. Perhaps even more important, the interview provides the candidate an opportunity to gain specific, detailed information regarding the position, in order to make an informed career decision.

Note Taking. Advise the candidate at the beginning of the interview that you will be taking notes. Avoid taking lengthy notes during the interview since the candidate might think you are not listening and may stop talking. The candidate may also become suspicious of what you are writing and become evasive. However, it is important to document the interview thoroughly because the information may be required to provide a basis for the selection or not selection. You may find it convenient to take a few moments after completing the interview to make summary notes.

Standard Questions. Questions should be designed to solicit information to assist you in evaluating the candidate. All questions must be job related. If a checklist questionnaire is used, you should not simply go over the list of suggested questions but use them as a starting point for additional questions, depending on the candidate’s responses. It is very important that the candidate be fully aware of the National Guard policies and how they might affect his or her personal life. You should talk to all candidates about the impact of National Guard requirements for travel, mobility, training, or shift work that may have an impact on their lives and families so that they can make informed decisions concerning National Guard technician careers. However, there are some questions that are inappropriate to ask anyone. Asking a candidate personal questions about family, marriage, religion, politics, or his/her personal life is an

invasion of privacy and unnecessary to the job interview. Notes on appearance or other non-job related criteria are inappropriate. Don't rush - a hurried interview only curtails communication.

Listen Attentively. Active listening will encourage the candidate to talk more freely. Don't listen without really hearing, no matter how many interviews you have been through. As one of the candidate's first impressions of National Guard management, you may be the lasting impression as well.

Don't Do All the Talking. Certainly you want to impart information about the job, but don't advise the candidate all of your views, opinions, and experiences. You need to gather facts and information about the candidate as well as to tell him/her about the job.

Don't Anticipate or Interrupt. Beware of breaking off a candidate's remarks or filling in the ends of his/her sentences. You may get the wrong idea of what the candidate really meant to say.

Consider How You are Asking Questions. Use open-end and appraisal-type questions; avoid closed-end questions which will result in short answers and burden you with the task of constantly asking questions while the candidate does little or no talking.

Don't be Adversarial or Antagonistic. An interview should not be an inquisition or a cross-examination. Questions should be direct and straightforward; if your technique is abrupt or challenging, the candidate will withdraw or become defensive.

Be Considerate Of the Candidate As a Human Being. Remember that you are playing a role in the candidate's life, which may very well affect him or her for many years to come.

Closing the Interview. The final step in the interview process is closing. Summarize the interview with the candidate and supply any missing information. It is important that the candidate understands what kind of job he or she is being considered for and what kind of environment he or she may be working in. The candidate should be given a final opportunity to ask questions at this time. Close the interview by thanking the candidate, giving him or her office address and telephone number, summarize what will happen next and an approximate time frame in which a decision will be made.

PART II – Interview Criteria

Upon receipt of a selection and referral certificate, interview candidates for selection consideration. The Selecting Official or recommending supervisor will

develop and utilize an established set of interview questions, to be used in interviewing referred candidates. By using the Interview Rating Form, the selecting official or the recommending supervisor should develop questions and rate candidates using the Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSA's) shown on the technician vacancy announcement. Questions should be consistent and identical for each interviewee for a position.

- Step 1: A prior set of interview questions should be developed for the KSA's being assessed in the interview. The questions asked in the selection interview must be carefully constructed to preclude questions and responses that do not provide information related to the ability to perform the work of the position.
- Step 2: Using an interview worksheet, the selecting official or supervisor will rate each candidate on each KSA.
- Step 3: The interview should be considered in combination with other evaluation methods to identify the candidate best qualified based on all the evaluation criteria.
- Step 4: Upon completion, interview worksheets will be forwarded with the selection package to the HRO. These worksheets will become source documents to support the selection or non-selection.

Every effort should be made to conduct each interview for a particular position with consistency, that is, each candidate for the advertised position should be interviewed using identical methods and questions.

Taken from the Georgia National Guard Human Resources Supervisor's Reference Guide and the Georgia HRO, Human Resources Regulation (HRR)
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